

**REMARKS**

Claims 7, 9, 10, 12, and 15-20 are pending in this application. Claims 7, 9, 10, 12, and 15 stand rejected and claims 16-20 are withdrawn from consideration. By this Amendment, claim 7 has been amended. The amendments made to the claims do not alter the scope of these claims, nor have these amendments been made to define over the prior art. Rather, the amendments to the claims have been made to improve the form thereof. In light of the amendments and remarks set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that each of the pending claims is in immediate condition for allowance.

Claims 7, 9, 10, 12, and 15 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,627,390 ("Pforr") in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2005/0136340 ("Baselmans") and U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0021841 ("Mori"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Among the limitations of independent claim 7 not present in the cited references is a plurality of assist features at each of the grid points not occupied by the real features and grouping subsets of real features with the assist features at the each of the grid points not occupied by the real features.

As disclosed in Baselmans and shown for example in Figures 7 and 10, assist features are not located at each of the grid points not occupied by a real feature.

In contrast, as shown in Figures 1b and 1c of the present specification, assist features are located at every grid point without a real feature. Further, when the grouping of real and assist features is performed as shown in Figure 1c, assist features are present at every corresponding grid point location not occupied by a real feature. Thus, because Baselmans fails to disclose the assist features at each of the grid points, the pending claims are in immediate condition for allowance.

Applicants have responded to all of the rejections and objections recited in the Office Action. Reconsideration and a Notice of Allowance for all of the pending claims are therefore respectfully requested.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

If the Examiner believes an interview would be of assistance, the Examiner is welcome to contact the undersigned at the number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,

/Ian R. Blum/

By \_\_\_\_\_

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